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DEPARTMENT FOR THE SECRETARY FROM CHARGE D'AFFAIRES
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SUBJECT: Strategy for Engaging Brazil on Defamation of Religions

REF: STATE 128320; STATE 128322; BRASILIA 1134; BRASILIA 1194
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CLASSIFIED BY: Lisa Kubiske, Charge d'Affaires a.i.; REASON: 1.4(D)

11. (C) Summary: Brazil's position on the defamation of Religions issue in the UN Human Rights Commission reflects a compromise between its objection to the concept on human rights grounds and its desire not to antagonize OIC countries with which it is trying to build relationships and which it sees as an important set of votes as it eyes a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In light of the political rationale for Brazil's abstention, I propose a four-pronged approach involving approaches to senior-level contacts at the Foreign Ministry; a visit to Brasilia aimed at finding ways to work with the GOB on this and other human rights issues; other governments willing to speak with the GOB; and more intense public affairs outreach via media and religious communities. End summary.

Background: Where Human Rights and Security Council Ambitions Collide

12. (SBU) Embassy has raised the issue of Brazil's voting record on defamation of religions several times in the Department of Human Rights and Social Affairs (DDS), Ministry of External Relations (MRE). (NOTE: All UNHRC and UN human rights matters generally are handled out of DDS, not out of the International Organizations Department. END NOTE.) The last time was with DDS Chief (A/S level) Minister Glaucia Gauch. Brazil has not disagreed with a single argument in our previous demarches and non-papers. The response has been always the same: the concept of defamation of religions is repugnant to Brazilian values and principles, and it is inconsistent with Brazilian law and international law. For those reasons, Brazil cannot and will not support a resolution that purports to punish the defamation of religions; instead, Brazil consistently abstains.

13. (C) When asked why Brazil does not vote against a resolution it finds totally objectionable, Gauch responded that it was enough to abstain. In the GOB's view, Brazil is taking a principled but practical position on the issue, not desiring to offend OIC countries, in particular powerful ones like Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia with which Brazil is attempting to deepen relations. Moreover, obtaining a permanent seat on the UNSC remains Brazil's overriding foreign policy goal. As a result, the GOB prefers to avoid antagonizing countries and groups of countries whose votes might be valuable in a future election.

A Four-Pronged Approach

14. (SBU) In light of this complicated reality, I propose a four-pronged approach to Brazil on this issue. At the forefront of each element must be the stated USG commitment to dialogue and cooperation, as well as a careful effort to cultivate Brazil as a leader and partner on this issue.

o,7 High-Level Discussions: Essential to persuading Brazil to change its vote on bDefamation of Religionsb and to work with us toward a compromise solution is an approach at the highest levels of MRE. A call from the Secretary to Foreign Minister Amorim, following up her recent letter, would demonstrate the importance the USG attaches to this issue. Approaches from the Deputy Secretary to Secretary General (Deputy Minister) AntC4nio Patriota and from Under Secretary Burns to Under Secretary for Political Affairs I Amb. Vera Machado (who oversees both human rights and international organizations policy) would similarly help elevate the importance of the issue in the Braziliansb minds. Lower level approaches alone are unlikely to change Brazilbs hands-off approach to the subject.

o,7 A Dialogue on Human Rights: A visit exclusively on this issue would, in my view, be of limited value, as Brazil accepts the basic premise of our objection. At the same time, a more detailed discussion of our views and action plan with both working-level and policy-level MRE players would be of value. The most effective approach (and, in the long run, a more valuable one to broader USG interests) would be to include the issue in a new regular dialogue on human rights, something that the MRE itself (via Amb. Patriota) has recently proposed. The broader context of an effort to exchange views and to find ways to work more closely with the GOB on human rights issues in international organizations (addressing, perhaps, some of the key country concerns, including Iran and the DPRK, on which Brazil has consistently abstained) would provide an ideal forum for discussing and seeking GOB support for the USG proposed action plan. Such a broad-based approach, which would appeal to Braziliansb interest in partnership with the United States that serves to validate their desire to be perceived as an international leader, will be better received than a targeted approach on this one issue.

o,7 Third-Country Approaches: As it has stepped out onto the international stage, the current Brazilian government has been careful to avoid aligning its policies with those of the United States. It values what it sees as its position as a bbridgeb between developing and developed countries, and its ability to talk with all countries. This general approach tends to limit the weight of USG opinions within the GOB. Because Brazil views itself as a leader in the Latin American bloc of countries, their influence on Brazilbs views is limited. It is more likely to listen to other countries it perceives as bindependentb of the United States, including South Africa, Russia, China, India, and France. Gaining support for our approach from some OIC membersb" particularly Egypt, Turkey, and other influential bindependentb voicesb"would be very important to our success in influencing Brazil. In general, approaches from any other country that supports our proposed action plan and testify to the collaborative nature of our effort will be helpful.

o,7 Increased Media and Religious Community Outreach: There are currently no groups within Brazil that have taken up this issue. However, Brazil is a multi-religious, multiethnic society that values freedom of religion, and an effort to increase understanding of the dangers of the bDefamation of

Religionsb approach might well yield dividends. Large media outlets such as O Estado de S. Paulo, the O Globo media outlets, and Veja magazine, were they to focus on this issue, could raise the public concern, particularly among the elite. Mission has had significant

success in placing interviews and op-eds by senior USG officials and respected academics. Visits by experts or senior USG officials would be excellent opportunities to address this question with the press. Again, third-country experts and officials supporting the view would provide important impetus to our efforts. In addition, outreach on the issue targeted, in the first instance, to religious communities that seemed to influence the GOB when they opposed the visit of Iranian President Ahmadinejad in Novemberb"particularly the Bahabis and Jewish communityb"could be expanded to include activist Catholics and Evangelicals and even indigenous groups and moderate Muslims.

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